

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of providing access to data having a particular physical data representation, comprising:
  - providing, for a requesting entity, a query specification comprising a plurality of logical fields for defining an abstract query; and
  - providing mapping rules which map the plurality of logical fields to physical entities of the data.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the abstract query comprises at least one selection criterion and a result specification.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - issuing the abstract query by the requesting entity according to the query specification; and
  - transforming the abstract query into a query consistent with the particular physical data representation.
4. The method of claim 3, where the query consistent with the particular physical data representation is one of a SQL query and an XML query.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the mapping rules comprise an access method for each of the plurality of logical fields.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the access method describes a location of the physical entities of the data.
7. A method of accessing data having a particular physical data representation, comprising:

issuing an abstract query by a requesting entity according to a query specification of the requesting entity; wherein the query specification provides a definition for the abstract query according to logical fields; and

transforming the abstract query into a query consistent with the particular physical data representation according to mapping rules which map the logical fields to physical entities of the data.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the abstract query comprises at least one selection criterion and a result specification.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the mapping rules comprise an access method for each logical field of the abstract query.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the access method describes a physical location of the physical entities of the data.

11. A computer-readable medium containing a program which, when executed by a processor, performs an operation of providing access to data having a particular physical data representation, the program comprising:

a query specification for a requesting entity, the query specification comprising a plurality of logical fields for defining an abstract query; and

mapping rules which map the plurality of logical fields to physical entities of the data.

12. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the abstract query comprises at least one selection criterion and a result specification.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the operation comprises issuing the abstract query by the requesting entity according to the query specification; and

transforming the abstract query into a query consistent with the particular physical data representation.

14. The computer-readable medium of claim 13, where the query consistent with the particular physical data representation is one of a SQL query and an XML query.

15. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the mapping rules comprise an access method for each of the plurality of logical fields.

16. The computer-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the access method describes a location of the physical entities of the data.

17. A computer-readable medium containing a program which, when executed by a processor, performs an operation of accessing data having a particular physical data representation, the operation comprising:

issuing an abstract query by a requesting entity according to a query specification of the requesting entity; wherein the query specification provides a definition for the abstract query according to logical fields; and

transforming the abstract query into a query consistent with the particular physical data representation according to mapping rules which map the logical fields to physical entities of the data.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim 17, wherein the abstract query comprises at least one selection criterion and a result specification.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim 17, wherein the mapping rules comprise an access method for each logical field of the abstract query.

20. The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the access method describes a physical location of the physical entities of the data.

21. A computer, comprising:

a memory containing at least (i) a requesting entity comprising a query specification providing a definition for an abstract query according to logical fields, (ii) a data repository abstraction component comprising mapping rules which map the logical fields to physical entities of data, and (iii) a runtime component for transforming the abstract query into a query consistent with the physical entities of data according to the mapping rules; and

a processor adapted to execute contents of the memory.

22. The computer of claim 21, further comprising a storage device containing the data.

23. The computer of claim 21, where the query consistent with the particular physical data representation is one of a SQL query and an XML query.

24. The computer of claim 21, wherein the abstract query comprises at least one selection criterion and a result specification.

25. The computer of claim 21, wherein the mapping rules comprise an access method for each of the plurality of logical fields.

26. The computer of claim 24, wherein the access method describes a location of the physical entities of the data.